

Committee on Resources

Subcommittee on Water & Power

Witness Statement

**United States House of Representatives
Committee on Resources
Subcommittee on Water and Power
The Honorable John T. Doolittle, Chairman**

**Written Testimony of O.L. "Van" Tenney, General Manager
Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District
March 30, 2000
Washington, D.C.**

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, my name is Van Tenney. I am the General Manager of the Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District.

The Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District ("GCID") is located in the heart of the Sacramento Valley and is the largest and one of the oldest diverters of water from the Sacramento River. GCID diverts water from the Sacramento River through a 65-mile long irrigation canal into a complex system of over 430 miles of laterals. The water is delivered to more than 1,200 families who farm approximately 141,000 acres of valuable, productive, agricultural land. Farmers within GCID grow such diverse crops as rice, wheat, tomatoes, cotton, corn, walnuts, almonds and pistachios, which are shipped across the nation and the world. More than \$270 million of agricultural products are produced annually on Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District farms, helping to sustain an estimated 12,000 jobs in the region.

GCID is also the sole source of surface water deliveries for three wildlife refuges - the Sacramento, Delevan, and Colusa National Wildlife Refuges - that comprise some 20,000 acres of critical wildlife habitat. Winter water supplied by GCID to thousands of acres of rice land also provides a rich oasis for migrating waterfowl.

My comments today, although based on my experience and understanding of GCID, also represent the views of the Northern California Water Association and the other Sacramento Valley interests it represents.

CALFED was formed in order to address water reliability, water quality, levee improvements, and environmental problems centered around San Francisco Bay and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and Estuary. Historically these issues and problems focused on the operation of the Central Valley Project ("CVP") and the State Water Project ("SWP") with the notion of "contributions" from other water users within the areas of origin north and south of the Delta not often directly discussed and, in any event, a poorly understood element to the larger Bay-Delta picture.

In order to address the question of CALFED authorization, reauthorization or future appropriations, one must be careful to understand the perspective and context in which the question is posed. In recent years, with more significant reductions in supply being experienced by those who rely upon the CVP and SWP, there has been a corresponding and often expressed view that solving the Delta problem must include “contribution of water” from those within the areas of origin, including those within the Sacramento Valley. We disagree with this view.

Water use within the Sacramento Valley does not contribute, in any meaningful way, to the Bay-Delta problem being addressed by CALFED. Because of its location upstream from the Delta, all water not consumptively used within the Sacramento Valley returns to the system for subsequent diversion by others or for Bay-Delta outflow.

This does not mean, however, that water use within the Sacramento Valley has had no adverse impact on the environment. These adverse environmental impacts have, however, been of a local nature and have focused on fish passage problems, not Bay-Delta problems. Moreover, these adverse environmental impacts have caused the imposition of operational limitations at least as significant as those currently posed in the Delta.

Utilizing my district, GCID, as an example, fish screen problems at our Hamilton City pumping facility, for a time, caused the total cessation of our ability to divert any of our water right supply. Even today, some ten years after our diversions were first affected by environmental regulation, we are still precluded from pumping 100% of our supply. We are, however, hopeful that within the next year we will again be able to resume the pumping of our full supply. This, however, has only been made possible through cooperative and partnership efforts involving GCID, the California Department of Fish and Game, the United States Bureau of Reclamation, the United States Army Corps of Engineers, the California Department of Water Resources, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service which resulted in the identification and implementation of the construction of a state-of-the-art fish screening facility at GCID’s Hamilton City pump station. This facility, when complete, will be the largest fish screen of its kind in the world.

CALFED was envisioned as a means of solving significant and complex problems. In this regard, it seems inappropriate to us to deal with CALFED and CALFED reauthorization as if it were “the problem” or even “a problem.” Rather the key, in our view, is to better focus CALFED’s efforts toward accomplishing its mission of solving the water reliability, water quality, levee improvement and environmental problems within the Bay-Delta.

The first step in this effort is to understand the regional variations that exist within the system. Not all regions in California should be treated or viewed in the same manner.

In this regard, in addition to recognizing the relative priority of the water rights involved, as well as area-of-origin protections, any CALFED authorization must also direct CALFED not to redirect impacts. CALFED should be directed to undertake actions in a manner which insures that solutions implemented to resolve problems within the Bay-Delta will not redirect negative impacts to other regions of California, including, but not limited to, the Sacramento Valley, mountain counties, and upstream areas within the San Joaquin River watershed.

With this fundamental direction in place, the Sacramento Valley can (with the understanding that it has its own environmental problems to deal with in mind) offer means that might assist in addressing identified problems in the Delta. These efforts, in our view, cannot be instituted on a “top down” basis, but instead

involve, at a minimum, cooperation with Sacramento Valley interests and preferably involve true partnerships between state, federal and local entities such as GCID.

By way of example, we offer the following:

1. We are willing to forge partnerships for the protection and development of upstream habitat. Sacramento Valley interests, in partnership with state and federal agencies, have resolved many long-standing endangered species problems by constructing fish screens and siphons and by re-managing water supplies. In addition, several water users have partnered with agencies to deliver water to wildlife refuges, and it has been done at a cost that is far less than what would have been expended without local cooperation. Sacramento Valley interests seek to forge additional partnerships as a means to address ESA problems as well as a means to generally enhance wildlife and fishery habitat.
2. We can assist in reducing increased water supply demand through Sacramento Valley water management. Sacramento Valley interests have been involved in an intense effort to develop an overall water management program which would allow us to use our existing water supplies to meet not only our existing needs but also our projected future needs. If successful, we would reduce substantially the amount of additional water that would need to be committed to this area of origin. In order to fully accomplish this, rules will need to be relaxed to allow for real water management, including the intra-basin transfer of water for these purposes. In addition, water users need the ability to locally manage both surface water and groundwater resources.
3. We can assist in maximizing the benefits of additional upstream storage. We are willing to partner with state and federal agencies in the development of upstream storage. Not only are we willing to discuss the utilization of our facilities to wheel water for off-stream storage, but we are also willing to talk about how a combination of direct diversions of surface water and groundwater management can maximize the benefits that can be achieved through any upstream storage project.
4. We are willing to discuss water management options that would allow the benefits noted above to be achieved. We believe that proceeding forward in CALFED and the related processes requires the forging of local partnerships with Sacramento Valley interests as a critical element to both accommodate and achieve the benefits discussed above.

Specific direction in reauthorization legislation that would be focused on the Sacramento Valley could include the following:

- CALFED and its member agencies shall, in cooperation with affected local interests, develop and implement programs for (1) the intra- and inter-basin transfer of water for both water supply and environmental purposes; (b) voluntary incentive-based acquisition of agricultural lands, which include clear protections for local areas, including provisions, in the case of land acquisition, for in-lieu taxes and in which the water obtained is utilized in local areas to off-set the need for additional Delta diversions; (c) properly funded, incentive-based conservation programs and urban water reclamation and recycling in which the water obtained is utilized in local areas to off-set the need for additional Sacramento River tributary and Delta diversions.
- CALFED and its member agencies shall develop and implement, in partnership with Sacramento Valley interests, a program to enhance the better management of water within the Sacramento Valley. These programs will include conjunctive use (direct diversion, stored water, groundwater) of the

respective region's water resources and management resources and the intra-basin transfer of water in order to insure that the existing and future needs of the Sacramento Valley are met while reducing the amount of new water that otherwise would need to be devoted to this purpose and to produce additional supplies of water for south-of-Delta consumptive use and for environmental purposes.

- CALFED and its member agencies shall prepare, in partnership with local interests, the programmatic and site-specific environmental and other related documents associated with the construction of an enlarged Shasta Reservoir and a Sites Reservoir. The preparation authorized herein shall be focused on, among other things, the need to operate this facility to provide water supply, water quality and environmental benefits on a balanced basis. The analysis shall assume the application of Section 404(r) of the Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1344(r). "Local interests" shall include entities within the Sacramento Valley and the Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District ("GCID") and Tehama Colusa Canal Authority ("TCCA"), with respect to an evaluation of the utilization of both the GCID Main Canal and the Tehama Colusa Canal as a means to wheel water into that reservoir.
- CALFED and its member agencies, in partnership with Sacramento Valley interests, shall implement integrated fish screen programs for the Sacramento River and study and construct, in partnership with the Tehama Colusa Canal Authority, a fish screen in order to resolve fish screen passage problems created by the Red Bluff diversion dam.

We believe that with the type of assurances and protections set forth above, CALFED can move most effectively in accomplishing its "problem solving" mission. Under these circumstances GCID and the Northern California Water Association would not only support CALFED reauthorization, but would actively participate, in cooperation and partnership with CALFED and its member agencies, in pursuing the types of solutions outlined above.

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